PHARMACARE NEWSLETTER

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Web site: http://www.hlth.gov.bc.ca/pharme/index.html

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Changes to Pharmacare Benefits

Effective November 19, 2001, Pharmacare will change the benefit status or coverage of the medications listed in this newsletter.

The changes reflect Pharmacare's objective to provide coverage for the most cost-effective and efficacious medications and to standardize coverage policies.

Who will be informed of the changes?

Due to the variety of conditions treated by these medications, Pharmacare will be contacting physicians and their association and college, pharmacists and their association and college, manufacturers and advocacy groups.

To ensure that all patients receive the information on these changes, we request that you post a copy of the attached patient information sheet in your pharmacy and retain the remainder for distribution to patients. If you require more copies of the patient information sheet, please contact the Pharmacare HelpDesk.

Do these changes affect coverage under the Palliative Care Benefits Program?

No, the changes do not effect coverage under the Palliative Care Benefit Program which is funded as a continuing care service.

What are the specific products and changes?

The following table lists all medications/products and details the changes in coverage. Also attached is a list of Drug Identification and Product Identification Numbers for the affected medications and products.

Drug/Drug Category	Benefit Change	Rationale
Anabolic Steroids Fluoxymesterone Nandrolone Testosterone Methyltestosterone	**De-listing as a regular benefit** **Limited Coverage via Special Authority:** for medically necessary treatments according to evidence	To ensure publicly funded dollars are limited to medically necessary treatment according to evidence (not for physical enhancement for athletes/bodybuilders).

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Drug/Drug Category	Benefit Change	Rationale
Blood Glucose Monitoring Strips	**Reimbursement Change:** From Current coverage: retail To: reimbursement limited to Actual Acquisition Cost up to 7% wholesale mark-up, plus professional fee for all Pharmacare Plans according to deductible and eligibility rules. Note: In general, Universal (Plan E) patients will experience lower costs for monitoring strips. Seniors (Plan A), however, will now be required to pay dispensing fees on Blood Glucose Monitoring Strips.	With current costs of approximately $20 million per year growing at an annual rate of 18%, blood glucose monitoring strips represent Pharmacare's second largest single expenditure. This change standardizes coverage for monitoring strips, bringing it in line with the program's drug reimbursement policy.
Flavoxate	**De-listing** Cost of oxybutynin $0.53 - $1.06 per day Cost of flavoxate $1.93 - $2.58 per day	Limited efficacy and higher cost of flavoxate in the treatment of involuntary urine loss, and, the availability of the Pharmacare benefit oxybutynin to treat the condition.
Growth Hormones – adults use only (Growth hormone coverage for deficient children under age 19 remains status quo)	**De-listing**: for adults. (Note: Adults who have received previous Special Authority approval will have current coverage levels maintained.)	The limited therapeutic benefit could not be justified at an average cost of $18,000 per patient per year.
Nasal Corticosteroids and related medications*	**De-listing**: nasal corticosteroids: fluticasone and mometasone. **De-listing**: other related Nasal Allergic Rhinitis drugs: cromoglycate, ipratropium and levocabastine. **Status Quo**: regular benefit coverage to be provided for the three least expensive nasal corticosteroids: beclomethasone, budesonide and flunisolide. **Limited Coverage via Special Authority**: mometasone for children 3 to 5 years old.	A literature review yielded no conclusive evidence that one nasal corticosteroid is more effective or causes fewer side effects than another in the treatment of Allergic Rhinitis. Cromoglycate, ipratropium and levocabastine are generally not as effective as corticosteroids for control of symptoms. Cromoglycate is now a non-prescription item.
Riluzole (Rilutek®)	**Full benefit coverage via Special Authority for patients diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).**	Riluzole is the first drug available to treat ALS and review of the evidence indicated efficacy and cost-effectiveness in a select group of patients.

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Drug/Drug Category	Benefit Change	Rationale
Topical Anti-Fungal Skin Preparations* Ciclopirox Clioquinol Clotrimazole Econazole Miconazole	**De-listing**: of all topical anti-fungal products, both prescription and over-the-counter, and of compounded prescriptions containing one or more of the de-listed medications **Limited coverage via Special Authority**: for diabetic patients and patients with circulatory conditions with fungal infections of the lower extremities.	Most infections are of short duration and self-limiting. Many products are now available without a prescription.
Vancomycin (Oral)	**De-listing as a regular benefit** Cost of metronidazole $4.42 - $6.20 (10 - 14 day course) Cost of vancomycin $280.40 - $392.50 (10 – 14 day course) **Limited Coverage via Special Authority if:** 1. patient has failed to respond to metronidazole 2. the organism is resistant to metronidazole 3. patient is unable to tolerate metronidazole, or is allergic to it, or is being treated with ethanol-containing solutions 4. patient is either pregnant or is a child under 10 years of age 5. patient is critically ill due to CDIC	Limited efficacy and high cost of vancomycin (oral) in the treatment of Clostridium Difficile Induced Colitis (CDIC) and the availability of the Pharmacare benefit metronidazole to treat the same condition. **Important: As this medication may be urgently required, PharmaNet HelpDesk Customer Service Representatives (who are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week) will be authorized to enter a Special Authority for vancomycin for a patient when a physician or pharmacist validates that one of the five criteria listed applies.**

* Other nasal corticosteroids and topical anti-fungal preparations are currently available but are already designated as non-benefits.

For further information on these changes, contact Pharmacare at the usual telephone numbers.